



United States Mission to the OSCE

Statement on the OSCE-COE Report on Trafficking in Montenegro

As delivered by Deputy Representative Douglas Davidson
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
November 13, 2003

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The United States welcomes the opportunity to discuss the results of the joint OSCE-Council of Europe experts' visit to Montenegro to investigate the human trafficking situation, in general, and the recent allegations against high-level government officials in connection with trafficking, in particular.

We appreciate the Montenegrin authorities' cooperation with the team of experts and their investigation as an encouraging and positive step forward. The general attitude of openness towards the international community and international assistance, as expressed by Deputy Prime Minister Djurovic during his June 16 appearance before the Permanent Council, is also appreciated.

The United States fully supports the recommendations put forward in the OSCE-Council of Europe report. We urge the Montenegrin authorities quickly and transparently to implement these recommendations. Two areas of particular importance, which are highlighted in the report, are the need to reform Montenegro's criminal procedures and the need to develop a witness protection program. These are crucial steps to improve the handling of future trafficking cases in Montenegro.

We note the October 31st decision of the Montenegrin Council of Ministers to dismiss Zoran Piperovic and Zoran Radonjic, upon the recommendation of Montenegrin State Prosecutor Medenica. While we are pleased to see individuals being held responsible for their actions, we urge the Montenegrin authorities also make the appropriate institutional and structural changes to improve the handling of trafficking cases.

There is a need to increase awareness of and sensitivity to the special needs of human trafficking victims, especially among government officials, the media, and the police. We support the team of experts' recommendations to reform the Law on Prosecutors in Montenegro and to increase training of law enforcement officials, members of the judiciary, and prosecutors on the intricacies of dealing with trafficking cases.

Specifically related to the police, we urge the Montenegrin authorities to reestablish and to maintain a special police unit to identify and investigate cases of trafficking in persons.

We also urge the Montenegrin authorities to follow the guidance in the experts' report on the handling of the investigation into allegations against high-level government officials in connection with trafficking.

We welcome Montenegrin government plans to adopt, by the end of this month, as well as concretely to implement in the future, an anti-trafficking strategy that takes into account the

OSCE-Council of Europe report and United States Government recommendations. We look forward to future updates on progress in implementing the recommendations in the report and on other anti-trafficking initiatives.

In closing, please allow me to extend our sincere appreciation to the joint OSCE-Council of Europe team of experts for conducting a detailed investigation, and for compiling a thorough report with concrete recommendations for follow-up. We appreciate their work and see this joint effort as a good example of cooperation between our organizations. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.